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The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1891.

A WRITER in our Shanghai morning contemporary who signed himself "D." took an interesting if rather impatient at suggestion the other day. The text of his discourse was the impossibility of Imperial Federation; the conclusion of his argument the expansion, *adulps* the ultimate of Canada and Australia, of the British Empire. This is to be effected by continued development of Great Britain's Oriental and African possessions—the growth in importance of Burmah and Malaya, formation in the Dark Continent of a great British African empire. This forecast, though correct, in any case it seems probable though it is not so certain, we think, "D." seems to imagine, that the Colonies will leave the mother country and thus surrender their splendid inheritance in Asia. However, we are now more especially concerned with the suggestion above referred to which was to the effect that, for the better retention and safeguarding of her Asian possessions Great Britain should acquire territory in Asia that could be colonized.

by the Caucasian race, which territory "D." has discovered in that home of occult lore and head centre of Buddhism, Thibet. The facts that there are already some six millions of inhabitants in the land of the Dalai Lama, and that the Emperor of China exercises a very jealous suzerainty over the country, by no means daunt our friend "D." We confess that the obstacles to a peaceful or successful occupation of this hermit country—supposing such occupation to be justified by necessity or political expediency—seem too considerable to bring the question within the sphere of practical politics, at all events for the present.

What are the facts? In the first place the opposition of both Russia and China would have to be faced. There is no doubt that Russia has an eye to the acquisition of Thibet for herself; witness the determined efforts made by her military explorers to penetrate the country and examine its resources and conditions. How suspicious the Thibetans and Chinese were of Muscovite intentions was sufficiently shown by the determined repulse met by the intrepid and persevering PREJAVALSKY, who was ruled from break on the very threshold of the great plateau. There is little doubt that the Thibetans were stimulated to oppose the great traveller's entrance by forces by the Chinese Resident, as it is notorious the Peking Government regard any attempt to break in upon the seclusion of the Thibetans by Foreign Powers with extreme disfavour and mistrust. No doubt Russia might be squared or disregarded, but even then the Chinese Government would have the tenacious resistance of China to donl with, a resistance that we believe could only be broken down by defeat in a war, or by the combined pressure of Russia and England. It will be remembered that the Separate Article to the Chetovs Convention, by which it was agreed that a Mission of Exploration should be sent by England, starting from Peking and journeying through Kaseuh and Koko-Nor or by way of Szechuen to Thibet and thence to India, was cancelled by Article IV. of the unfortunate Convention negotiated at Peking in July, 1885, by Mr. O'Connor. That gentleman allowed himself to be terribly over-reached on that occasion; China was so anxious to obtain the cancellation of this Separate Article referring to Thibet that she would willingly have foregone any sop to her amour propre with regard to her shadowy claim to suzerainty over Burmah in order to gain that concession. It would be very difficult now to win her consent to the despatch of such a Mission, however well assured she might be of its purely scientific character and object. The recent hostilities carried on by the Thibetans against the British forces in Sikkim were also intended as a broad hint to England to restrain her curiosity, and if not directly inspired by the Chinese Government were manifestly approved by them, seeing that they never interfered to check the aggression of their tributary. Any attempt therefore to occupy Thibet would not only be strenuously resisted by the fanatical lamas, who dominate the people, but these fighting priests would be strongly backed up by China, and an invading force would assuredly find numerous Chinese soldiers ready to dispute their advance.

So much for the prospects of any efforts to acquire Thibet. What would the country be worth when won? This question is not to be answered offhand. Thibet is, perhaps, at the present moment more of a *terra incognita* than almost any considerable state outside Africa. From time to time adventurous travellers have contrived to obtain glimpses of the country, but none of them have yet succeeded in really exploring it, and our knowledge even of Lhasa, the capital of the Dalai Lama, is decidedly vague. Thibet is the designation of an extensive region stretching on the map from 78 deg. to 104 deg. E longitude, forming indeed a huge cap to Hindostan, and is geographically an Indian rather than a Chinese dependency, though it must be admitted that racially the Thibetans are cognate to the Chinese. The area is somewhat over 30,000 square miles, and the western portion—the only part at all known by Europeans—is a fairly table-land with a dry climate, where the air is so rarefied that travellers at first respire it with difficulty. The cold is, however, not excessive, and the climate is no doubt fairly suited to the European constitution. The country is Western Thibet is very mountainous and is singularly bare of forests or large vegetable products, but affords good grazing ground for vast herds of cattle, sheep, and goats. Barley, wheat, and peas are the chief crops, and there is no great variety of fruit or vegetables, 'but no doubt these could be largely increased by cultivation. The chief constituents of the mountain ranges are said to be clay-lava, granite, limestone and quartz, and gold, silver, lead, copper, turquoise, lapis lazuli, nitre, and borax exist, the latter in great quantity. The total absence of timber is of course a serious drawback to the prosecution of mining or terrapine, though it would not long remain so if the country fell under European rule. Wool is also plentifully produced, and articles manufactured from it are exported to China. The trade with China, though conducted overland across the mountain passes on the backs of coolies all the way from Kaseuh, is considerable and is fairly remunerative in spite of the duties with which it is hampered. If the trade with India through Sikkim be permitted free play, however, the bulk of Thibetian trade will certainly be attracted in that direction and Indian tea will take the place of the coarse brick tea so painfully conveyed from Sin-sing in Kaseuh. Thibetian population is very thin in proportion to the superficies of the country, but a great extent of the territory is absolutely sterile or occupied by large lakes, and it is difficult to judge how far its productiveness could be stimulated to maintain in addition a considerable Caucasian population. Without further information as to the true resources of the country we are not in a position to say whether it could support a large immigration from Europe, any more than we are to decide upon the feasibility of making the territory pay for its administration by the British Indian Government. Perhaps "D." or some kindred spirit, will solve these ques-

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Telegraphic Address *Press*. Telephone No. 11.

The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1891.

A WRITER in our Shanghai morning contemporary who signed himself "D." took an interesting if rather impatientest at suggestion the other day. The text of his discourse was the impossibility of Imperial Federation; the conclusion of his argument the expansion, *malgre* the ultimate limit of Canada and Australia, of the British Empire. This is to be effected by continued development of Great Britain's Oriental and African possessions—the growth in importance of Burmah and Malaya, formation in the Dark Continent of a great British African empire. This forecast may be correct; in any case it seems probable though it is not so certain, we think, "D." seems to imagine, that the Colonies will leave the mother country and thus surrender their splendid inheritance in Asia. However, we are now more especially concerned with the suggestion above referred to which was to the effect that, for the better protection and safeguarding of her Asian possessions Great Britain should acquire territory in Asia that could be colonized.

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